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Indiana Public Safety Officials Stress Preparedness Before Winter Weather Descends

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Michael Lewis 574-834-1104 x726, Michael.lewis@noaa.gov

As colder weather further settles into the heartland, the National Weather Service (NWS) and partners in public safety encourages Hoosiers to begin preparing now for what could be a cold and snowy winter.

This winter, a weak El Niño weather pattern may have an impact on Indiana. El Niño is a climate term referring to warmer than normal equatorial Pacific Ocean temperatures that impact global weather patterns. "For Indiana, a weak El Niño often has brought cold and snowy winters in the past," said Michael Lewis, Warning Coordination Meteorologist of the Indianapolis National Weather Service (NWS) Office. "Winter is nearly here. It's everyone's job to take safe action when the National Weather Service issues winter weather warnings."

"Tornadoes and floods also are concerns for Hoosiers during winter," said Meteorologist in Charge Michael Sabones of the NWS Northern Indiana office. "Indiana had six tornadoes last winter so being prepared and taking action for any hazard are keys to safety," added Sabones.

For more information about winter weather, see the National Winter Preparedness Website at www.nws.noaa.gov/om/winter

Governor Mitch Daniels has proclaimed November 11-17, 2012 as Winter Weather Preparedness Week in Indiana.

“When it comes to preparing for winter, personal responsibility is key,” said IDHS Executive Director Joe Wainscott. “Keep a few essential supplies readily available in your home in case a winter storm disrupts utilities or prevents you from being able to travel safely.”

IDHS recommends assembling and maintaining a disaster kit. **Ten items to include in your family’s disaster kit are:**

1. Food and water for 3 days (includes 1 gallon of water per person, per day)
2. Battery operated all hazards radio
3. Flashlight
4. Extra batteries for radio and flashlight
5. First aid kit
6. Extra clothing, sturdy shoes, blankets, and personal hygiene items
7. List of emergency phone numbers
8. Important documents (copies of photo ID, social security card, insurance and banking information)
9. Cash (Small bills. Power outages can limit use of ATMs and credit cards)
10. Special items (baby formula, insulin, life sustaining medication)

“Have a Disaster Supply Kit for your vehicle also,” said Carol Greeley, Disaster Public Affairs Spokesperson for the American Red Cross of Greater Indianapolis. “This is a good time to “winterize” your Disaster Supplies Kits for your vehicle. Add warm clothing, extra blankets and hats, mittens, etc. to your kit and make sure your vehicle kit includes bottled water, first aid supplies, essential medications, extra coats, blankets, flashlights, kitty litter, a small shovel, a candle, metal container and matches and a red cloth to tie on your car to signal for help,” Greeley added.

Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) Chief Operations Officer Troy Woodruff added, “We want all motorists and road crews to have a safe winter season. When plowing and treating our highways, INDOT trucks turn and exit the road frequently and drive slower than posted speeds, so we ask motorists to stay a safe distance behind snow plows and give our drivers room to work.”

“Obeying posted speed limits, or reducing your speed below these limits when conditions require are keys to reducing the potential for a crash,” added Captain Dave Bursten of the Indiana State Police.

Travel to school can be difficult during snow and ice storms. “School bus drivers are trained and ready for winter driving,” said Dave Woodward with the Indiana Department of Education.

For more information about winter preparedness, visit getprepared.in.gov or <http://1.usa.gov/NWSWinterWeather>.

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Contacts for media internal use only

NWS (Northern Indiana): Michael Lewis 574-834-1104, Michael.lewis @noaa.gov

IDHS: Emily Norcross or John Erickson 317-234-6713, pio@dhs.in.gov

INDOT: Will Wingfield 317-233-4675, wwingfield@dot.in.gov

Red Cross: Carol Greeley 317-684-4351, carol.greeley@redcross.org

ISP: Dave Bursten 317-232-0064, dbursten@isp.in.gov

DOE: Dave Woodward 317-232-6975, dwoodwar@doe.in.gov